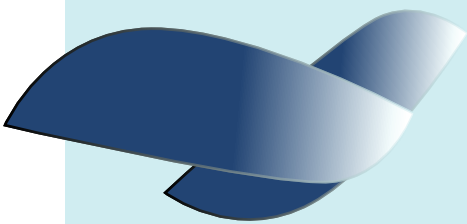


Semiannual Report on Human Trafficking 1-6/2024



NATIONAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM
FOR VICTIMS OF HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Early 2024 in Brief

At the beginning of 2024, the most significant observation is the decrease in new referrals and clients to the National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking (NAS), compared to previous years. The growth in the total volume has also been moderate since the beginning of the year.

The NAS does not perform outreach work. Therefore, victims of human trafficking and exploitation are discovered through other authorities and operators. Often, the victims themselves also contact the NAS directly. The NAS assesses whether there are grounds for a client relationship based on the referrals it receives. Clients are only admitted to the Assistance System with the victim's consent and only if the definition of human trafficking and the victim's need for assistance are met. The proportions of operators submitting referrals has also changed from the previous years. Alongside the police, Victim Support Finland has previously been a significant submitter of referrals. Now, more than half of the referrals were made by the Finnish Immigration Service or reception centres. The role of the NAS is not always clear, even to other operators in the field, and some operators may not always realise when to refer a client to the NAS. This leaves room for some concern about unidentified victims of exploitation.

Early 2024, the NAS has been active in guidance and counselling as is specified in legislation. An example of this is the organisation of regional training for reception centres and other operators. More information on the broader cooperation with reception centres can be found on page 12. In addition, at the beginning of the year, the NAS took over the responsibility for coordinating regional networks against human trafficking (IKV) from Victim Support Finland. Learn more on page 13.

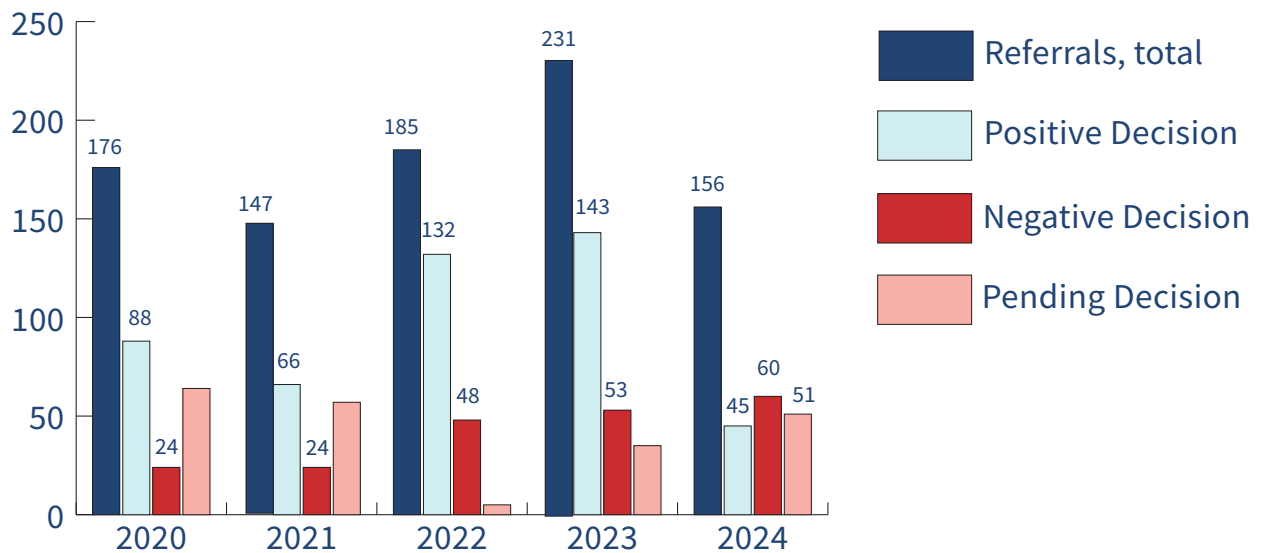
The Assistance System conducts expert work that includes decision-making under official liability. Early 2024 saw an increase in negative client relationship decisions. While striving to ensure that no victims of human trafficking are left unidentified, it is important to check that no client is admitted on false grounds.

Number of Referrals on the Decrease

In the first six months of 2024, fewer new referrals were entered in the Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking compared to the corresponding period of the previous year, totalling 156 referrals. The trend is currently declining.

The graph presents statistics for the first six months of 2020–2024

All Referrals 1–6 / 2020–2024



The graph figures reflect the smaller number of referrals in the current year compared to previous years, and how the proportion of negative decisions is higher than before (61% in 2024). Similarly, the number of new clients was unprecedentedly low.

The most common reason for negative decisions was that the applicant did not need assistance from the NAS. For example, the exploitation had taken place abroad, and the person did not feel that they needed help from the NAS in Finland.

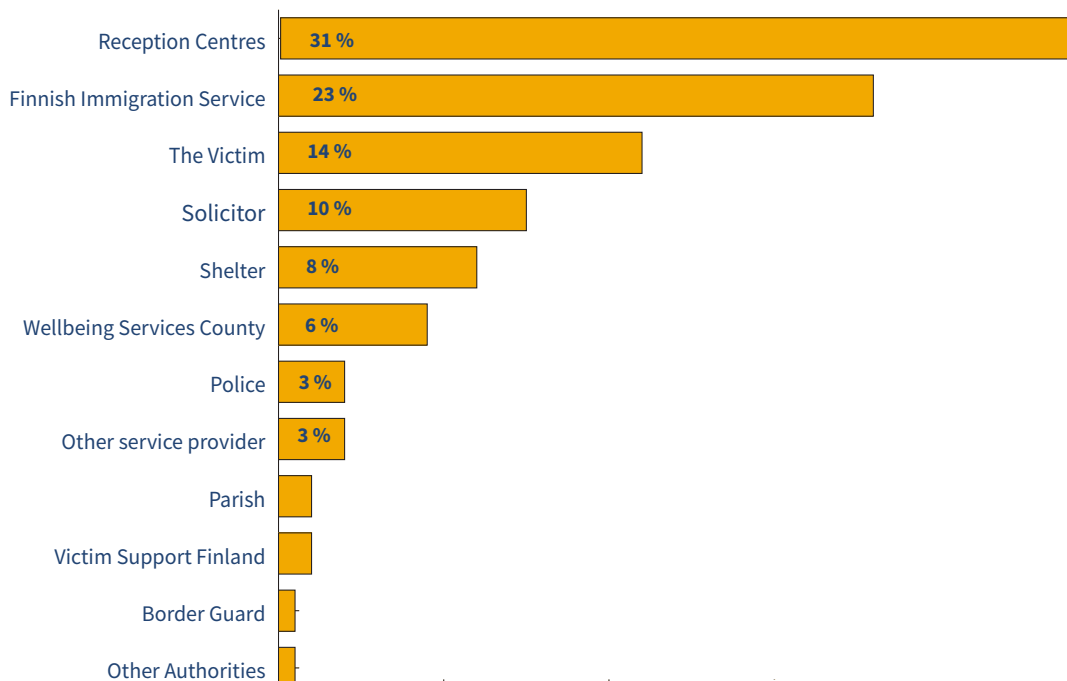
It should be noted that analysing the statistics is challenging due to the small numbers of referrals, new clients and people who had fallen victims in Finland.

156 New Referrals in Early 2024

The NAS receives referrals from various stakeholders who are able to identify victims of exploitation. Victims also personally seek assistance from the NAS. Unlike in previous years, the majority of referrals came from reception centres and the Finnish Immigration Service. The share of referrals made by wellbeing services counties is slightly on the rise.

Operators that referred clients to the Assistance System in 2024 (6 months)

The number of applications submitted was 156.



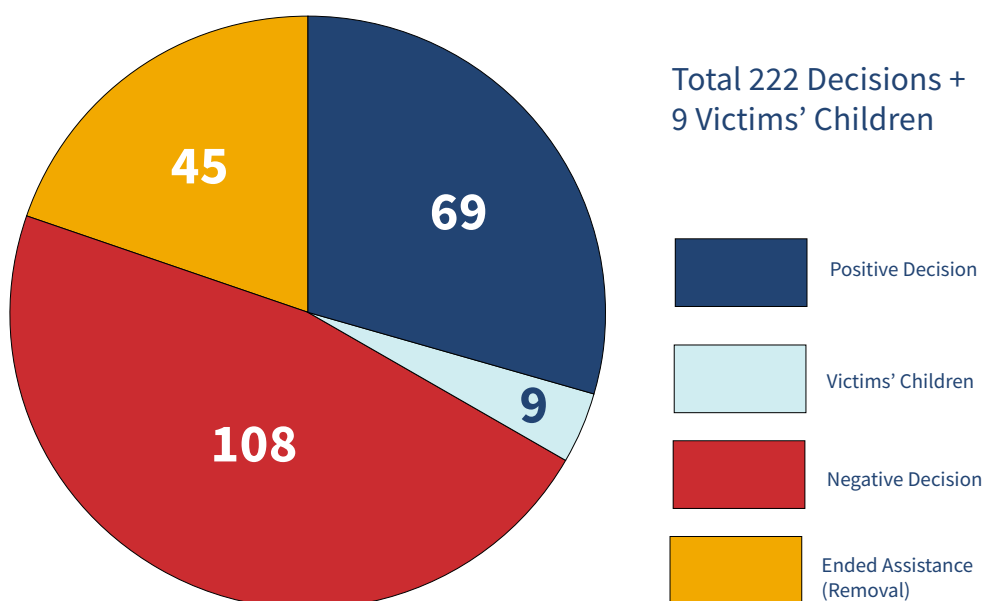
As the NAS does not perform outreach work, the victims are identified through referrals made by other operators. In previous years, the police and Victim Support Finland have been key actors in identifying victims of human trafficking and referring them to the NAS. The clients referred to the NAS by these two operators often include people who have fallen victims in Finland.

Human trafficking is a serious crime and helping the victims can contribute to the prevention or investigation of criminal activity. Therefore, anti-trafficking actions have an extensive impact on society.

A total of 222 decisions were made in the first half of the year concerning client admittance to the NAS, of which 177 related to new referrals. Of these, 61% were negative and 39% positive. The proportion of negative decisions was significant. A negative decision was issued to applicants who did not have the grounds for becoming a client of the NAS, such as the need for assistance due to a status as a victim of human trafficking. Some negative decisions were issued to people who had almost identical and clearly false stories about becoming a victim of exploitation. Such cases are identified in the NAS and, when necessary, other authorities are also informed.

Resources were also allocated to the removal of clients who were no longer in need of assistance given by the NAS. There were 45 decisions to end the assistance. Leaving the country, no longer needing assistance, a personal request to end the assistance, or a person's disappearance have been reasons for client removal.

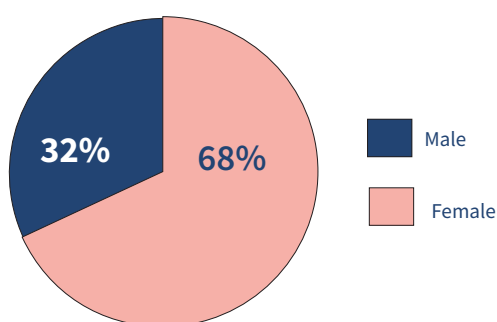
Decisions Made in 2024 (6 months)



New Clients in 2024

New Clients in 2024 (6 months)

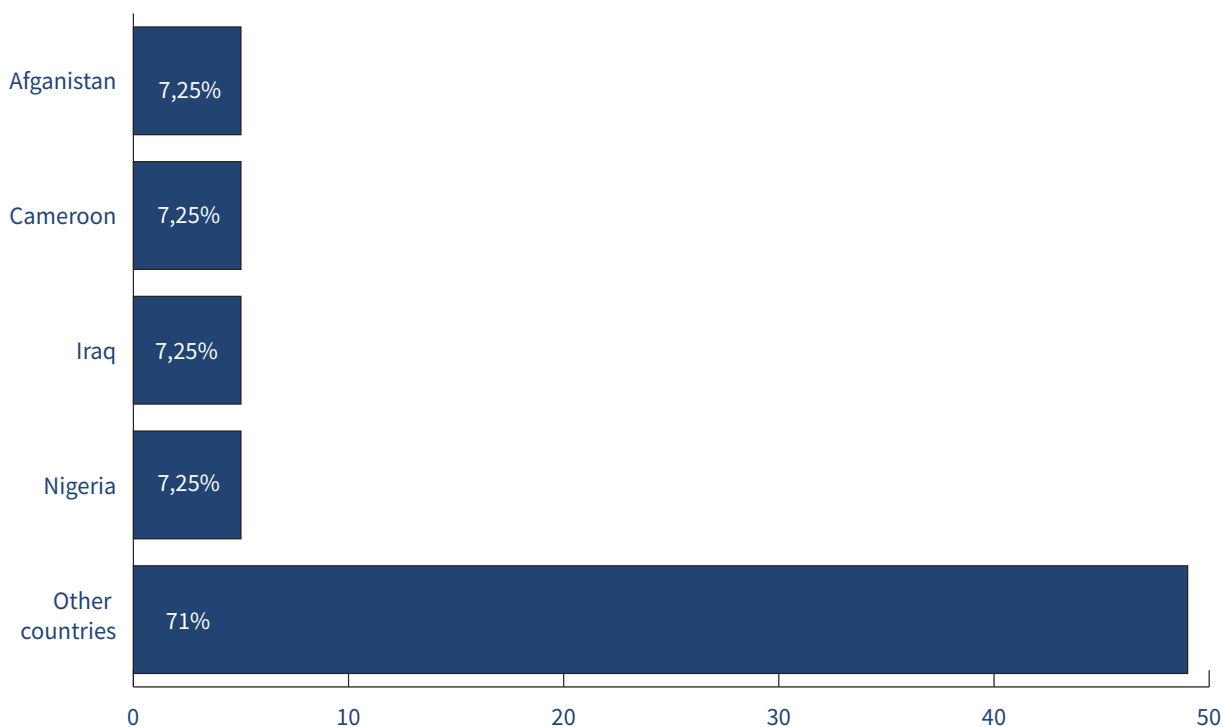
69 adults, 9 minors



In 2024, the system admitted 69 new clients, about two thirds of whom were women and girls, as well as nine children of clients (a total of 78 people). About 9% of the clients were minors, 45% were 18–29 years old, 30% were 30–39 years old, 10% were 40–49 years old and 4% were 50–59 years old. One client was older than this. Compared to the total number of clients last year, the age structure is now younger than before.

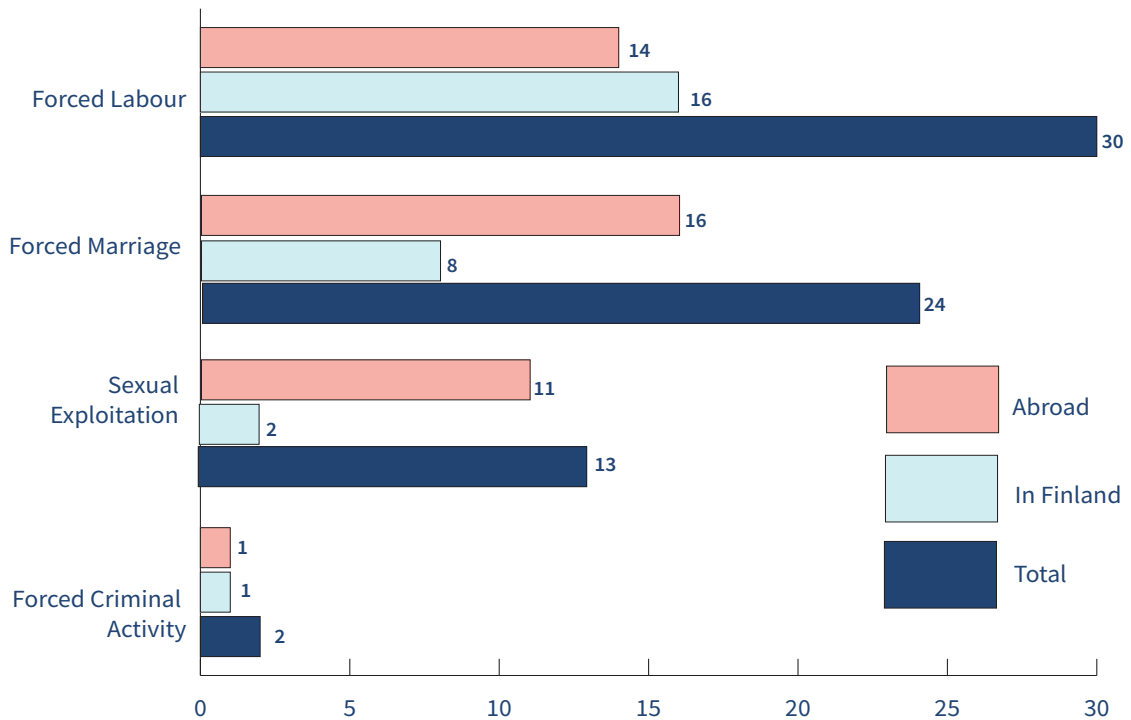
The new clients represented 31 nationalities. The other countries on the graph (71%) include all nationalities with fewer than five victims. There were also Finnish citizens among those exploited.

New Clients (Total 69) by Nationality in 2024 (6 months)



Forced Labour Remains the Most Common Form of Exploitation

Forms of Exploitation in 2024 (6 months)



In early 2024, forced labour was the most significant form of human trafficking (43% of all cases). Forced labour has many typical characteristics. The employee does not have the usual right to refuse tasks. There may be a debt relationship between the employer and the employee, and the work often involves threats of violence, deportation or reporting the victim to the authorities. Victims are often misled with regard to the nature of the employment. There is still a great deal of forced labour in Finland.

In the statistics, the share of forced marriages has risen to 35% of all new clients. It seems that forced marriages are on the rise. Last year, for example, the share of forced marriages was equal to the share of sexual exploitation, but the latter has now decreased. However, the small number of clients presents a challenge for the analysis.

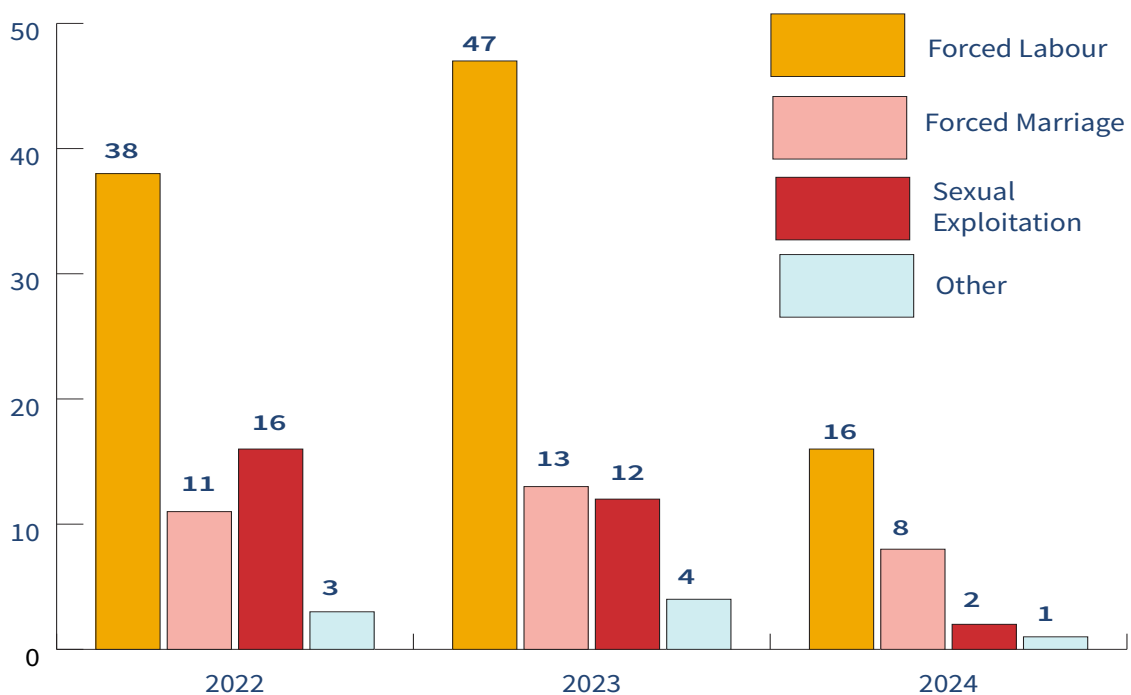
Finland also helps people who have fallen victims of human trafficking abroad. For example, the forced labour or forced marriage may have taken place entirely or partially abroad, even if the victim had previously lived in Finland.

Exploitation Cases in Finland

In early 2024, the NAS accepted 27 new clients who had fallen victims in Finland. Of these, 13 were men and 14 were women. The persons represented 16 nationalities. As none of the nationalities had more than five representatives, the nationalities remain confidential information.

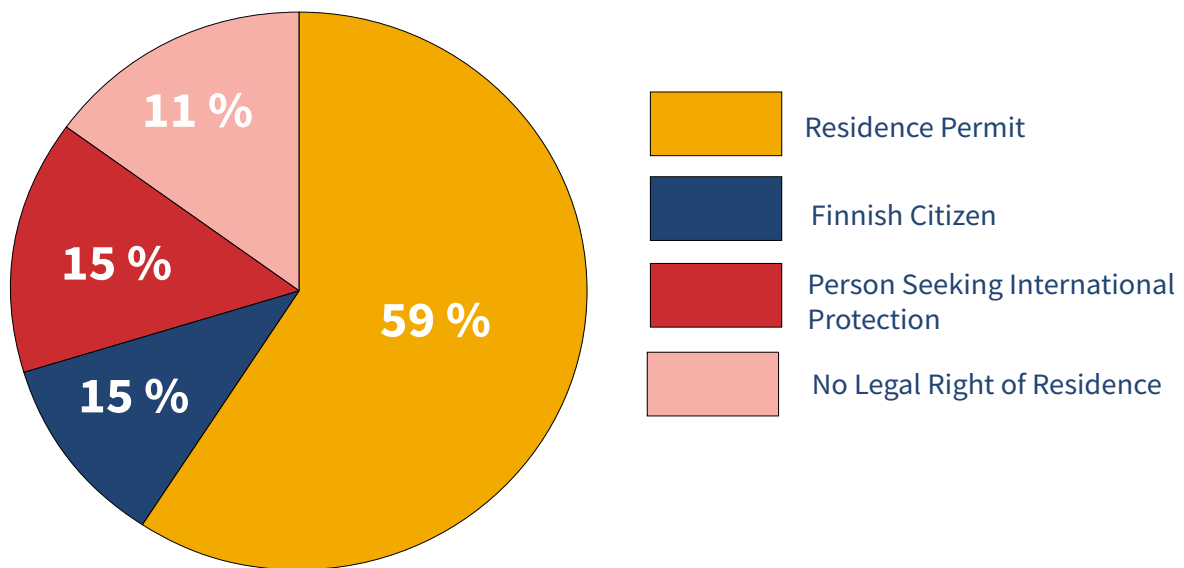
The graph presents the statistics for the first half of the past three years (from January to June 2022–2024). The number of new clients who had fallen victims in Finland is significantly lower than in the previous two years. However, the percentage of forced labour is in line with previous years. In early 2024, forced labour accounted for 59% of all cases (61% in 2023 and 56% in 2022). Forced marriage accounted for 30% of the exploitation cases in Finland in early 2024. The share of forced marriages was 17% in early 2023 and 16% in early 2022. The share of sexual exploitation has decreased every year, but this does not necessarily mean a decrease in exploitation. In international comparison, sexual exploitation is the most typical form of human trafficking and accounts for more than 50% of all human trafficking cases. Finland is an exception in this regard.

Forms of Exploitation of cases in Finland 1-6 / 2022-2024



In Finland, cases of forced labour that emerged in the early part of the year highlighted the restaurant industry, the construction industry and work carried out in the homes of private individuals.

Persons Victimised in Finland by Right of Residence in 2024 (6 months)



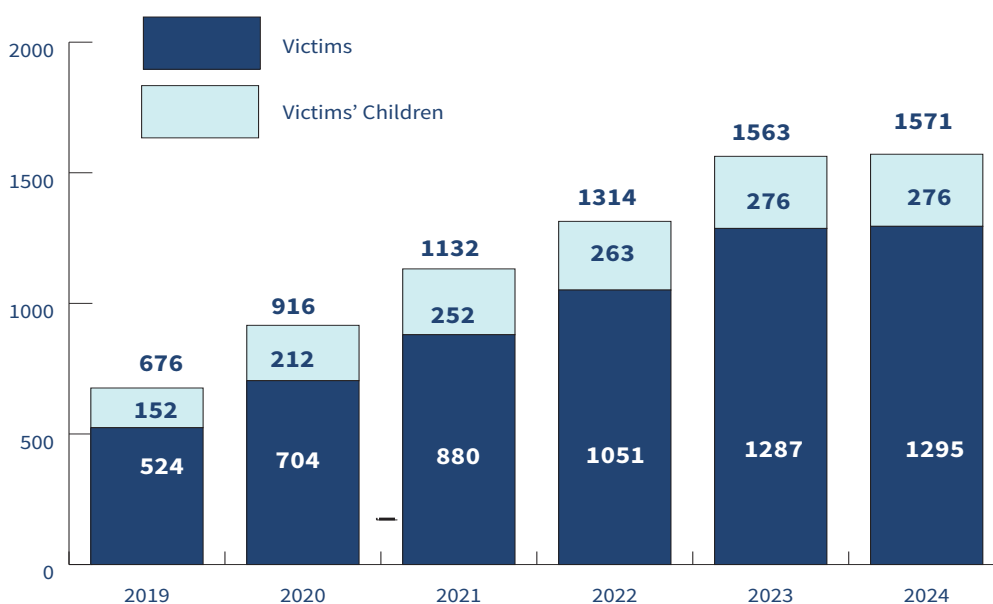
As in previous years, a large proportion of those exploited had a residence permit in Finland. Another issue that emerges is the equal percentage of Finnish citizens and those seeking international protection. Finnish citizenship does not protect against exploitation.

Those without a legal right of residence in Finland are in a vulnerable position and susceptible to exploitation. However, identifying them is challenging for many reasons. The abusers threaten them with deportation, or the victims do not have the means to learn about the laws and rules of Finnish society

All Clients, Summary 30 June 2024

On 30 June 2024, the NAS had 1,571 clients, of whom 1,295 were identified victims and 276 were their minor children. Of the victims, 19 were minors and 105 had been admitted to the system as minors. About 60% of the victims of human trafficking were women. .

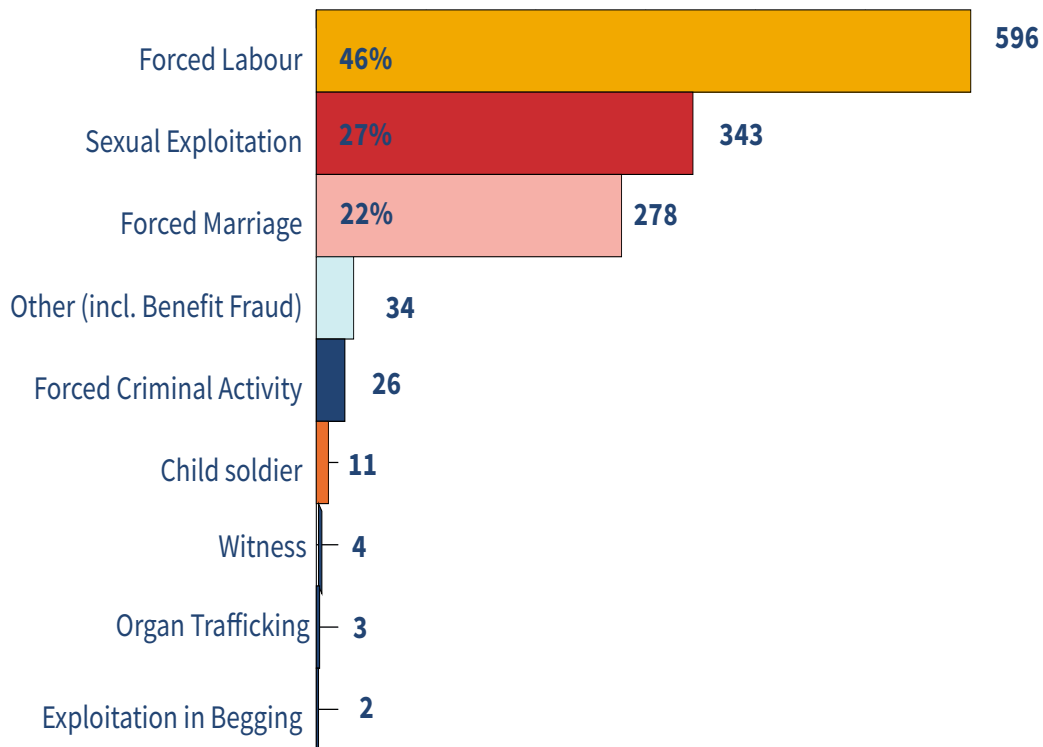
All Clients in 2019-2024, situation 30 June 2024



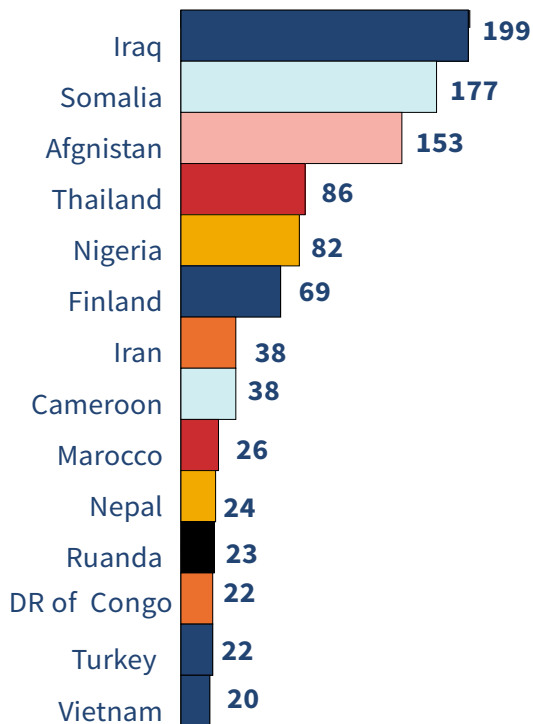
Of all the clients of the NAS, nearly half (46%) are victims of forced labour. 27% are victims of sexual exploitation and 21% of forced marriage. Other identified forms of exploitation are not as common.

A trafficking victim who does not have a legal residence permit in Finland may be granted a reflection period, during which they may stay in Finland legally. The duration of the reflection period may be from one to six months. In 2024, the NAS has issued five reflection periods for victims of human trafficking. The issued reflection periods have ranged from one to three months.

Forms of Exploitation, All Clients (1,295), 30 June 2024



Largest Nationalities, 30 June 2024



10 to 19 persons per nationality:

Eritrea, Syria, Bangladesh, Gambia, Uganda, Russia, The Philippines, China, Ukraine

Less than 10 persons per nationality:

Pakistan, Angola, Colombia, Bulgaria, Ghana, India, Kenya, Sudan, Egypt, Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire

In addition, 44 nationalities represented by fewer than 4 persons, and 15 individuals of unknown or no nationality..

In total, 79 different nationalities

The NAS and Reception Centres Work Together

The NAS and the Reception Services Department of the Finnish Migration Service have updated instructions to all reception centres. The updated website contains information on identifying victims of human trafficking and the NAS, as well as on the co-operation between reception centres and the NAS when assisting a victim.

In spring 2024, the NAS and the Reception Services Department offered training on human trafficking for reception centres. As the Finnish Immigration Service has tendered for reception centres this year, the need for correct information is significant with the new operators. The next training is scheduled in autumn 2024.

Reception centres have an important role in identifying victims

Identifying a victim may be difficult. Often the victims' circumstances are complicated and even dangerous, making communication difficult. A victim may hide their situation due to shame, ignorance or threats. Therefore the reception centres' personnel need to understand the extent of human trafficking and recognise the signs. A person may fall a victim in Finland or abroad, or on their way to Finland, before entering a reception centre, or during a stay at the centre.

Clients are helped in co-operation

A NAS employee evaluates the need for assistance at a joint meeting. The evaluation covers the overall situation and possible assistance needs caused by human trafficking: safety threat, criminal issues, need for crime support staff, and the client's own view on the need of assistance. Any required assistance is arranged in co-operation with the reception centre and by agreeing on methods and responsibilities. The aim is to have combined services for the client. In case assistance needs result from human trafficking, the NAS may provide additional assistance to complete services provided by reception centres.

It is important to help the victim break free from the circumstances that resulted in human trafficking and safely recover from their experiences and to prevent them from becoming a victim again.

The NAS in Charge of Regional Anti-Trafficking Networks

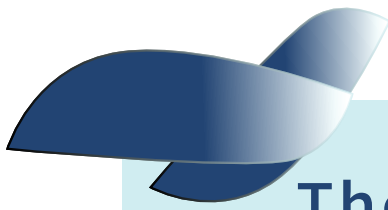
Years ago, regional networks were founded to ease the anti-trafficking work. Previously the networks were under the responsibility of Victim Support Finland, or Pro-Tukipiste, but as of the beginning of the year 2024, the NAS has been in charge of these networks. Any person whose work is related to or involves human trafficking or its victims, may participate in the network. These regional networks against human trafficking are called IKV networks.

The aim is to continue regional work against human trafficking. An open and easy-to-access network gives a chance to identify the phenomenon and work together against it. The participants have found it useful to meet others working with similar issues and share current regional news. In Finland, the NAS is expert authority in the work against human trafficking. It has duties based on law, including providing advice and guidance. The objective is to strengthen stakeholder cooperation and raise topics concerning human trafficking and exploitation in public discussion regionally, and both strengthen and support regional expertise.

Regional networks

There are currently six active networks: Southern Carelia (Lappeenranta), Ostrobothnia (Vaasa), Northern Savonia (Kuopio), Turku, Oulu and Tampere regional networks. The participants represent, among others, Integration services, reception centres, the police, Finnish Border Guard, Regional State Administrative Agencies, wellbeing service counties, Victim Support Finland, Pro-Tukipiste and many other organizations. There may also be regionally operating solicitors who focus on anti-trafficking, representatives from trade unions, youth workers or church employees. The joint objectives are to prevent human trafficking and exploitation of those in a vulnerable position, improve identifying exploitation, and assisting any victims of exploitation.

All regions support regional networking, as it raises awareness and improves victim identification. Networking is a functional channel, and it gives many opportunities to arrange regional training.



The NAS in a nutshell

The National Assistance System for Victims of Human Trafficking, which has operated since 2006, is a national centre of excellence and expert authority in the work against human trafficking. Joutseno Reception Centre, which is part of the Finnish Immigration Service, is responsible for the system. The NAS has three offices (Lappeenranta, Helsinki and Tampere).

The purpose of the NAS is to help trafficking victims, their underage children, and persons who assist in investigations of trafficking offences. It helps both Finnish and foreign victims of human trafficking equally.

As required by their needs, the client is entitled to advice and guidance, social and health care services, a reception allowance or social assistance, safe housing, and interpretation and translation services. If the client wishes to go back to their home country, they receive assistance for voluntary return. Clients may be provided with legal advice and aid.

The organisation of the assistance and the services provided for victims have been decentralised to different actors. The practical delivery of the assistance depends on the applicant's right of residence. If they do not have a municipality of residence in Finland, their services are provided by the NAS. Asylum seekers receive their basic services from the reception centres, in addition to which they receive advice and, if necessary, services from the NAS. If the client has a municipality of residence in Finland, their services are provided by the wellbeing services county. They may also receive advice from the NAS. Provision of services by the NAS ends when the client no longer needs assistance, leaves the country, or wishes to end their client relationship with the system. This leads to a turnover of clients within the system from year to year.

The NAS maintains the national website ihmiskauppa.fi and a 24/7 helpline at 02954 63 177.

Additional information:

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